

Water Matters: Green Landscaping

Allen County Partnership for Water Quality (ACPWQ)

By Jacquelyn Buck

As summer approaches, homeowners throughout the county begin planning their garden and lawn care goals. Perhaps this year, the goal is to have more flowers decorating the house or less time spent mowing the grass. No matter the goal, it is our hope at Allen County Partnership for Water Quality (ACPWQ) that you keep water quality in mind.

Water quality is impacted by every choice you make for you lawn and garden because rainwater does not abide by property lines. Every raindrop that moves across your property flows into the nearest body of water, such as a river, and eventually to the ocean. This is known as a



watershed. Interesting tidbit about watersheds: just because it is our discharge water, does not mean it is not drinking water for someone downstream. Therefore, it is our duty to protect what is going into our streams, which can start with how we care for our lawns. Here at ACPWQ, we like to suggest that our neighbors use green landscaping practices.

What do we mean by green landscaping practices? Will they be more costly? Be more time consuming?

For the most part no and no! What we mean by green landscaping is to plant **native plants** in your flowerbeds, plant a **rain garden**, use **rain barrels**, try **adding porous surfaces**, and **test your soil!**

- 💧 **Native Plants:** These plants require less fertilizer and water while also frequently being great for our local pollinators! Since native plants have evolved with this area, they are adapted to survive here without additional fertilizers, pesticides, and additional water needs. These plants and seeds can be purchased at local greenhouses throughout the county.
- 💧 **Rain Garden:** A rain garden is a small depression with native flowers and shrubs designed to collect and hold rainwater temporarily from driveways, homes, and lawns. These gardens are impressive filtering systems helping to trap runoff fertilizers, pesticides, sediments, and other pollutants that the rainwater collected from your lawn!
- 💧 **Rain Barrels:** Rain barrels are systems designed to catch and hold rainwater coming off your roof. This beneficial practice allows you to save water in two ways. First, it helps contain rainwater that would otherwise be rushing down your property line, adding to the overwhelmed streams. Secondly, the water collected is there for your use of watering plants and gardens without having to ever turn on the tap or pull from a well.
- 💧 **Pervious Surfaces:** Most of our driveways, rooftops, patios, and roads are made of impermeable surfaces, or they do not let water through them. We want our roof to protect us from the rain, but does it matter if our driveway is made of permeable or non-permeable surfaces? Instead of using blacktop or concrete slabs, consider using gravel, pervious concrete payments, or pavers. Instead of creating a cement patio, consider using a wooden deck! These simple adjustments allow rainwater to be absorbed into the ground, not forced into a stream.



- 💧 **Test Your Soil:** Perhaps one of the easiest ways to **green** up your lawn is to check what the soil pH and nutrient needs are before adding chemicals to your lawn and garden. These tests can be purchased for a low cost at big-box stores and can save you a lot of money in unnecessary chemicals! Additionally, they help water quality for all your neighbors downstream, because you will be accurately fertilize your lawn without excess that ends up being washed away with rainwater.

This list is long, and will take time, but perhaps this year you work on installing one rain barrel and plant one native plant. If we each take one-step, though seemingly insignificant, together add up to create **BIG** change!